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ABSTRACT

This first volume in a two-part report reviews completed and proposed research studies on learning needs and problems in primary education and describes research proposed for Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, India, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand. An introductory chapter considers the following factors involved in children's failure in primary school: lack of emotional and financial support; inadequacies in the school's physical environment or learning climate; and difficulties in adjustment and motivation, especially for children disadvantaged by their social group, language, physical location, or health. The second chapter gives an overview of research studies that illustrate types of investigation conducted in the region. In the third chapter, further research required in the region is described under ten headings: (1) preparation of children for school; (2) teaching strategies and instructional materials for disadvantaged children; (3) linguistic development in primary education; (4) meta-analysis research; (5) ethnographic studies; (6) cognitive development and education; (7) indicators of learning problems; (8) factors conducive to learning; (9) wider implementation of successful programs; and (10) communication of information about research findings. The final chapter lists recommendations for implementing research studies and specific research proposed by member countries in the first five areas. (CB)

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LEARNING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Report of Technical Working Group Meetings

PS 014819

Volume I: Research issues and proposals

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LEARNING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Report of Technical Working Group Meetings
Bangkok, Thailand, 6 - 12 September 1983

Volume I:
Research issues and proposals

UNESCO REGIONAL OFFICE
FOR EDUCATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
Bangkok, 1983

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OFFICERS OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS ON MEETING THE LEARNING NEEDS OF CHILDREN

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PREFACE

This is a report of two Technical Working Group Meetings on Meeting the Learning Needs of Children, held at the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, from 6 to 12 September 1983.

The two Meetings organized in the context of the Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID), were entitled:

1. Technical Working Group Meeting on the Nature of Learning Problems and Future Research

2. Technical Working Group Meeting on Training Programmes for Teachers, Supervisors and Other Concerned Personnel.

In his opening address, Mr. Raja Roy Singh, Assistant Director-General, Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific, referred to the high priority assigned by the countries of the Region to the objectives of the Meetings in the context of national efforts in universalizing primary education, with emphasis on access, completion and achievement. He related these efforts to the major Programme Area of Unesco's Second Medium-Term Plan (1984-1989) entitled "Education for All", and its linkages with adult literacy. (See Annex IV for the Opening address).

Fourteen participants from ten countries and a representative from SEAMES reviewed the state of the art in research and training of teachers and educational personnel with reference to the learning needs of children, and in particular to those of disadvantaged population groups, and prepared a synthesis of understandings, plans and experiences and suggested concrete actions on new approaches and topics for future research and reform of training programmes, methods and techniques. (See Annex I for the Agenda, and Annex II for List of Participants).

At the final plenary session, the report was adopted with modifications which have been incorporated.

In the closing session, several participants expressed the view that they were beginning an important task – some called it a new era – for universalizing education to focus on parental education, pre-primary and early childhood education; on new types of research approaches; and better conceived and organized training programmes.

They agreed with Mr. Raja Roy Singh, Assistant Director-General, ROEAP, that a sustained and committed effort needs to be made on the following four fronts, namely:

1. Identify and bring to the notice of Unesco and the APEID network the names of scholars and practitioners who have been working on the learning problems of children in primary education in the countries, to enable

Unesco to expand the group which has participated in the two Technical Working Meetings;

2. Prepare an inventory of the studies carried out in each country so that the nature and enormity of the problems is better appreciated by the peoples and policy-makers of the countries of the Region;

3. Explore and disseminate the programmes and projects which have been undertaken by institutions and individuals so that the range of insights and experiences is fully documented, and proper lessons learned from the diverse efforts being made in the countries but not generally monitored;

4. Reflect on the programmes and processes for the preparation of educational personnel; consider the feedback that has been obtained; and disseminate this growing knowledge-base about the problems and prospects of preparation of educational personnel in relation to the problems of learning in primary education.

It was announced by Mr. Raja Roy Singh that within the framework of APEID, a newsletter will be prepared and distributed soon on the universalization of primary education. This will serve as a medium of communication on research and reform, and will also serve to raise the consciousness of people and policy-makers about the problems of learning, with particular reference to children of disadvantaged groups.

The report is published in two volumes: both volumes contain the common Chapter 'Learning Needs and Problems in Primary Education'. In addition, Volume I covers identification of topics for future research and suggestions on organizing the research agenda; Volume II deals with the identification of needs for reforms, and suggestions for undertaking reforms, in preparing teachers and other educational personnel.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Although the potential of children to learn and to benefit from education is enormous, such potential is nowhere near to being fully realized in many countries in the Region. Even when access to primary education is available, participation rates are often disappointingly low, and dropout rates alarmingly high. First, what causes this unsatisfactory, if not unacceptable, situation? And second, how can matters be improved?

To answer these questions, a broad understanding is required of the complex set of factors which is involved in ensuring that children succeed in primary education. Such factors concern children themselves, their teachers and schools, their families and communities, and their societies and cultures. These are considered in turn.

Children

A significant change in perspective on the skills and abilities of young children has occurred during the last two decades. During the earlier part of this century, investigators of child development tended to emphasize what young children could not do, whereas more recently the emphasis has been on what young children can do. In brief, it has recently become apparent that when they enter primary school, young children possess a wider range of intellectual and social skills and abilities than they have traditionally been credited with. This is not to say that school entrants are not limited. Obviously, they typically do not yet possess skills in literacy (the ability to read and write), or numeracy (the ability to manipulate systems of number). Less obviously, while they are good at completing intellectual and social tasks whose purpose is clear to them, they are not good at completing highly abstract tasks which lack a clear purpose. Thus if they see the point of an activitiy, appreciate its goal, and understand what is required to them, young children can often perform remarkably well. But when they fail to see the point of an activity through its being highly abstract and divorced from their previous experience, then young children often fail to perform well.

With this background in mind, now consider what is expected of children in the primary school. First, it is usually a strange and unfamiliar environment to children, where they are required to behave and interact in novel ways. All schools have a routine and rules of procedure, and children are expected to interact with teachers and fellow students in a more formal manner than they are used to. Many children may be unfamiliar with such procedures, and possess little experience of their practice. Secondly, in primary school, children are expected to acquire highly abstract systems of representation when they are introduced to the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) – systems whose nature and purposes young children may well fail to appreciate. Thus in primary school, children are expected to function, socially and intellectually, in ways that are often new and strange to them.

If these quite novel expectations of the primary school are not readily met – that is, if children fail to succeed in early primary school – then this can result in a loss of self-respect. Such children may then doubt their own self-worth, or blame the school, or perhaps do both. Whatever happens, such children fail to build confidence in their ability to learn, fail to enjoy learning and the experience of school, and may then drop out of primary education at an early point – as happens so frequently in many countries in the Region.

These general problems may of course be exacerbated by other factors related to children's personal circumstances. For example, the child may not have been adequately prepared before encountering formal education at the primary level. Children may also suffer various other sorts of disadvantage, including:

1. Language difficulties – the dialect of the school may be different from the dialect of the home in monolingual societies; or children may be instructed in a language other than their first language in bilingual or multilingual societies.
2. Physical location – children may be located in remote or isolated rural regions, or live in urban slums, places where educational provision is typically poor.
3. Physical state – hungry children often cannot concentrate on learning.
4. Social background – children may come from a low socio-economic level family which is under considerable economic and other pressures; or have an ethnic, racial, or caste origin that makes difficult ready integration to at school.
5. Physical, mental, emotional, or multiple handicaps – children who have sensory or neurological dysfunctions, impaired intellectual capacity, experience emotional traumas or difficulties, or who have multiple handicaps – all will have learning problems of some sort.

In summary, negotiating the transition from the informality of the pre-school years to the novelty and formality of the primary school is found difficult by many children. With appropriate teaching in the school, and necessary support from the family, children can usually negotiate the transition successfully. However, when appropriate help and support is not forthcoming from teachers, schools and families, learning difficulties will arise and learning problems may well set in.

Teachers and schools

Factors known to be associated with learning problems in children include inadequacies in the training of teachers. Should programmes of teacher training and development fail to provide teachers with a good understanding of young children's abilities and limitations; or fail to inculcate a sense of commitment to the well-being and progress of children; or fail to provide teachers with appropriate attitudes, strategies and instructional techniques to encourage the success and achievement of all children – then learning problems are bound to arise. Such problems will also persist, and even get worse, unless teachers are provided with the skills to monitor

children's school progress, the ability to recognize when learning problems are occurring, and knowledge of how such problems can be effectively overcome.

In schools, while an obvious contribution to learning problems is that of an inadequate physical environment, less obvious but often just as important is the adverse effect of an inadequate learning climate. Harsh or disinterested teachers, inappropriate texts, boringly repetitive drills, lack of a sense of enjoyment – all may contribute to a poor climate for educational success. Also in relation to schools, it is well known that the lack of adequate resource materials, and the use of textbooks and teaching methods which are remote from children's interests and experience – these, may also lead to learning problems. A further factor concerns highly adverse pupil-teacher ratios – if the number of children in a class is very high, then this can preclude children receiving individual attention from the teacher, some individual attention being essential to the detection and amelioration of learning difficulties. The role of school administration and supervision is also important. Where administrators are not well tuned to the needs of schools, children and their communities, the incidence of learning problems can be expected to be high, as will also be the case if teachers are not appropriately supervised and provided with necessary support where required. At the same time, teachers require a measure of autonomy with regard to the curriculum, and to have sufficient flexibility to reorganize the sequence of learning experiences to meet children's needs and to overcome these problems through effective programmes of remediation. Educational policies and practices should be organized with the need for teacher autonomy and flexibility in mind.

Families and communities

The role of the family and the community in supporting the endeavours of children in primary education is paramount. While good teachers and good schools will do all they can to help children learn; without the advice, support, and encouragement of the family and community, children may frequently fail to adjust to school and so experience learning problems. It is unfortunately the case that appropriate support from families and communities is frequently not forthcoming to many children. This is particularly so in families and communities disadvantaged by poverty, remoteness, and isolation. As they are already under economic pressure, parents may encourage their children not to remain in school beyond a certain level, but instead to leave school to work and so help alleviate the family's impoverished circumstances. As adverse socio-economic circumstances are often associated with low levels of parental education, parents themselves may not value education to the extent that is required for their children's educational progress and success. Further, if parents have had little or no benefit of education themselves, they may be unable to inform their children of what is expected in primary education, and be unable to assist and encourage children who encounter learning difficulties. Likewise, communities disadvantaged by impoverishment and illiteracy are unable to provide general support for children in education, nor can they provide particular support in the form of community resources and facilities such as libraries and other learning aids.

Societies and cultures

For children to succeed in education, their educational success needs to be valued and expected by the child's culture. Moreover, the society must be prepared, or assisted, to enable such educational success to be secured. In societies and cultures where the provision of equal educational opportunities for all – girls as well as boys – is not adequately supported, participation rates, retention rates and completion rates in education are low, while the incidence of learning problems and difficulties is high. In such circumstances, the learning needs of children are clearly not being met. Thus while the cultural strengths that different societies possess should be recognized and built on, the ways in which successful universal primary education can enhance societies' existing strengths need constantly to be made clear, to parents and local communities, to national governments, and to the international community.

This Chapter began by asking what causes learning problems in primary education – problems which lead to a lack of progress and achievement in education, and which often result in unacceptably high dropout rates. Factors related to children, teachers and schools, families and communities, and societies and cultures have now been briefly indicated. The learning needs of children are reasonably well known, as are the learning problems that frequently occur. We can therefore now turn to the second question with which this Chapter began – namely, how can matters be improved?

One way of beginning to answer this question is to identify effective research programmes which could be directed towards the prevention or reduction of learning problems in primary education. For example, can children be better prepared for school, and can the support and encouragement of their parents be effectively engaged? Can more effective instructional strategies and appropriate resource materials be developed for use in the schools? How can learning problems that arise from language problems be reduced? In the next chapter of this Report, research studies on learning problems in the Region are reviewed; research studies and programmes which are required in the Region are then identified in Chapter Three; and the way in which such studies and programmes could initially be implemented in the Region is indicated in Chapter Four.

Chapter Two

AN OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH STUDIES IN THE REGION

The investigation of children's learning needs and problems in the Region has consisted of a variety of approaches adopted in different countries by various agencies, such as University, College, and Ministry departments. In addition, research institutes have been established in several countries in the Region – for example, the Australian Council for Educational Research; the Institute of Education and Research in Bangladesh; the National Council of Educational Research and Training in India; the Curriculum Textbook and Supervision Centre in Nepal; the National Institute of Psychology in Pakistan; the Centre for the study of Children and Youth in the Philippines; the Korean Institute for Research in the Behavioural Sciences in the Republic of Korea; and the Institute of Behavioural Sciences Research in Thailand.

In studies of the learning problems of children, the plight of children from disadvantaged groups has received considerable emphasis.

With respect to language in education, it has been observed that children who are required to learn to read, and receive educational instruction in, a language with which they have not been previously familiar, frequently encounter learning problems. Language problems are also prevalent in children from low socio-economic backgrounds, a finding reported by the great majority of countries in the Region. It has also been found in Pakistan that children of parents whose educational level is low often do not exhibit high-level verbal and abstraction skills, a contributory factor to low school achievement. The attainment of good verbal and communication skills in primary schooling has also been observed to be relatively poor in disadvantaged groups in studies completed in the Philippines and Thailand. With respect to the oral language of children and the language of the school, several studies in India have drawn attention to the adverse effects that can arise when there is "dissonance between the language spoken by disadvantaged groups and the (middle class) language used in books and instruction".

Studies of relationships between the learning problems of children and levels of parental education have also received attention. Children's low achievement in school is often associated with parental illiteracy. India has also found that "first generation learners" (i.e., children whose parents have not been educated) often perform poorly on abstract reasoning tasks. In Nepal, it has been found in some parts of far western regions that girls of parents who are illiterate are often prevented from attending school and are married at an early age. The Republic of Korea has introduced parent education programmes designed to provide basic information on child development, improved child rearing techniques, and advice on improving the family environment. In Australia, research on parent involvement in primary education has found that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds are willing to be involved in their children's education, provided that schools and

teachers can communicate the aims of such involvement in a way that parents can understand, and provided that schools and teachers provide appropriate advice and resources which parents can utilize.

With regard to cognitive development, an amount of research has been completed in the Region, often within a Piagetian framework, which assumes that children proceed through stages of cognitive development. (Here it should be noted that the results of recent research, completed mainly in Europe and the United States of America, indicate that children can exhibit certain intellectual and social skills at a considerably earlier age than is predicted in Piagetian theory. These recent findings have considerable implications for practice in early childhood development and education, particularly in relation to the pre-school and early primary school years.)

Research in the Philippines has found that middle class children complete conservation tasks about one year ahead of their completion by children from low socio-economic groups. However in Pakistan, studies of primary school children's completion of Piagetian cognitive tasks found no difference between the performances of children from urban and rural areas. Rather than cognitive level underlying learning difficulties in such children, unsuitable educational activities were more important factors. Research in the Philippines has attributed poor performance in classification, attention and perception to impediments to cognitive development, such as children's low socio-economic background.

With regard to the development of "cognitive competence", the importance of good nutrition, and the importance of adequate early stimulation, have been reported. Research in India has drawn attention to the need for adequate nutrition if the child is to develop adequate mental capacities, and has also noted that inadequate nutrition is more prevalent in lower socio-economic groups. Research in India has also found that children who perform significantly better on cognitive tests tend to have mothers who are rated high on the cognitive stimulation of their infants and children.

Research has also been conducted on the learning styles of children. For example in the Philippines, the preferred method of learning of children who have had no kindergarten experience at the pre-school level has been investigated. Lack of pre-school experience was found to affect children's attention skills, and the way in which they attempted to learn. In India, a study of children's attention to relevant and irrelevant learning cues has found this to be associated with performance or cognitive tests in the age range 6-9 years, although after several years of schooling (ages 11-12 years), this is no longer the case.

Attitudes towards learning have also been studied in the Region. In Nepal, it has been found that in some parts of far western regions negative attitudes towards the education of females are prevalent. To encourage the enrolment of females in literacy programmes, special reading materials for females have been prepared. In Pakistan, instruments for measuring the attitudes of rural populations towards the education of boys and girls have been developed.

School achievement and dropout from schools have also been widely studied. Assessment of scholastic achievement in the "basic subjects" in Nepal has found that

children of upper primary stages find it easier to use numerical systems which employ Hindu Arabic symbols rather than alternatives such as Devnagiri numerals. Studies in Thailand have found that scholastic achievement is closely related to parental vocation and socio-economic status, geographical region, dialects spoken at home, and school size. To increase scholastic achievement, Malaysia has laid considerable stress on the acquisition of the 3Rs in early primary education, seeing this as the essential stepping stone to subsequent education. In Australia, scholastic achievement was surveyed nationally in 1975 and 1980. However it has recently been decided to abandon further national surveys of achievement for a variety of reasons, one of which is that the findings of national surveys were found to have little impact on the educational system, which is a State, not a National, responsibility. In future, achievement is to be monitored at State level.

With regard to dropout rates from primary education, studies in Bangladesh have found that high dropout is associated with a number of factors, including poor economic conditions at home, pressure to leave school to help support the family, parental indifference, negative parental attitudes which consider education to be "ungainful", and unfair treatment in school and negligence by teachers. In Pakistan, high dropout rates have been found to be related to school curricula which are inappropriate to children's cognitive levels. India also has high dropout rates, and particular problems with children from scheduled castes and tribes.

In conclusion, while it should be noted that this Chapter has made no attempt to provide an exhaustive survey of the research conducted in the Region, the studies mentioned here nevertheless illustrate the types of research being conducted in several of the countries of the Region, and provide some indication of what problems are being identified and how they are being tackled.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH STUDIES REQUIRED IN THE REGION

In light of children's learning needs and problems in primary education, as described in Chapter One, and in light of research studies conducted in the Region as described in Chapter Two, further research required in the Region can now be indicated. This is done under ten main headings:

1. Preparation of children for school

As children often do not know what is expected of them in primary education, they need to be better prepared for, or better introduced to, schooling. Factors to be considered include the effects of different types of pre-school provision, and the roles of parents and teachers in increasing children's awareness and knowledge of what is involved in primary education. The encouragement of preparatory skills and experience – such as good oral language practice, listening and other concentration skills, as well as being familiar with books and stories – also need to be considered. Ways in which parents may contribute to this preparatory process, through the introduction of parent involvement schemes and programmes of parent education, also need to be examined.

2. Teaching strategies and instructional materials for disadvantaged children

Disadvantaged children who encounter learning difficulties in school may benefit from the development of teaching strategies and instructional materials designed to meet their particular needs. This required to be studied in the Region, through consideration of such factors as: the development of school programmes which improve children's scholastic achievement and which promote a worthwhile self-image; a comparison of the learning styles of children from advantaged and disadvantaged groups; the promotion of good "study skills" in the disadvantaged; and the development of techniques (methods and materials) which will enable teachers to identify and overcome children's learning problems, particularly in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

3. Linguistic development in primary education

Language problems have been seen to underlie many learning problems in children in the Region. Research needs to be undertaken to identify how oral language development can be appropriately encouraged, particularly as it may serve as an important precursor to learning to read; and how the language problems of children having to acquire a new language in primary school can be best alleviated.

4. Meta-analysis research

When a large number of different studies has been conducted on a certain topic, an attempt can be made to infer the aggregate result through the use of meta-

analysis, a technique for organizing and extracting aggregate information. Since decision-taking and policy-making seek general conclusions from a mass of individual research findings, the potential utility of meta-analysis needs to be considered, including the training of practitioners in its use. Initially, meta-analysis could be carried out on studies that have been conducted on the effects of early childhood education; on the effects of different teaching methods; and on achievement in "basic" subjects.

5. Ethnographic studies

There are cultural and ethnic practices which have potentialities for improving the learning process – meditation techniques may improve the ability to concentrate, for example. Utilization of such practices for educational purposes should be investigated. Also, language factors, cultural differences, value conflicts, and the ethnic or caste origins of parents need to be examined, in so far as they contribute to parental attitudes towards schooling. Study of successful and less successful institutions, communities, families, parents, and teachers should also be undertaken, to identify determinants of educational achievement.

6. Cognitive development and education

Difficulties that children experience in acquiring information through the lack of adequate attention and concentration skills, and difficulties that children experience in retaining instruction through the lack of adequate memory skills, are two problems causing particular concern in certain countries in the Region. Factors to be considered include: the identification of methods of improving attention skills and concentration span (for which meditation techniques are being tried in some countries such as India); and the development of children's awareness of cognitive functions such as memory ("meta-memory"), as well as study of memorial techniques themselves, to enhance retention.

7. Indicators of learning problems

The sooner learning problems are identified and overcome, the better for all: for children – learning problems only get worse if not attended to; for teachers and schools – unresolved learning difficulties are not conducive to good morale or to a good learning climate; and for countries – unresolved learning problems cause high dropout rates which imply enormous personal and economic wastage. Useful and reliable indicators of learning problems therefore need to be identified, so that learning problems can be detected early. Factors to be studied include the development of assessment procedures, techniques and instruments for the early detection of learning difficulties, particularly in reading, language, and mathematics. Where learning problems are detected, effective ways need to be found to train educational personnel in conducting "needs assessment", where programmes and procedures are developed to meet and evaluate detected learning needs. Before any procedures are implemented at a national level, they should be thoroughly pre-tested in smaller scale research studies.

8. Factors conducive to learning

In several countries in the Region, there are massive dropout rates from primary education. Such children clearly encounter difficulties in learning, do not succeed in school, and do not enjoy learning. Ways of increasing success, stimulating enjoyment of learning, and building early confidence need to be found at the earliest stage of primary education. Other factors to be considered include identifying the characteristics of good learning climates; developing effective methods of study with due recognition of individual differences in ability and differences pertaining in individuals' circumstances; and an identification of what makes schools attractive and worthwhile to children, particularly those from disadvantaged groups.

9. Wider implementation of successful programmes

Programmes which have been developed and implemented with considerable success in one country in the Region could well have relevance for other countries. However, considerable adaptation would typically be required, to ensure that the adapted programme is relevant to the new cultural context in which it is being introduced. Research is therefore required to pre-test proposed adaptations with samples of children, teachers, and parents, from all strata of the new cultural context.

10. Communication of information about research findings

Research findings which have practical application in educational settings often fail to reach parents, teachers, and educational policy-makers. Research is therefore required to identify ways of improving this situation, whereby research findings with practical applicability are disseminated to those who could make use of them. Factors to be considered include examination of what effective roles could be played by the media, educational agencies, and parent and teacher organizations.

Chapter Four

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDIES IN THE REGION

While ten areas which require further research in the Region have been identified in Chapter Three, it is not anticipated that research studies will be launched in all areas immediately. Below, five research studies of particular interest to several member countries of the Region are indicated. For the remainder, it is anticipated that information on these areas will be compiled by the Unesco Regional Office in Bangkok, and regularly circulated amongst interested member countries. For the five areas in which research is to be conducted initially, the regular dissemination of information about research progress and findings will be characteristic.

Other general aspects of the implementation of proposed research studies are:

- they should typically involve sizable population groups rather than being narrowly focused;
- proposed research which refers to disadvantaged groups and populations will be encouraged;
- evaluation of the outcomes of proposed research should be specified;
- an indication of the practical applicability of the research findings should be provided;
- the potential for implementation of the research findings at national levels should be indicated, as should the potential for implementation at Regional level after appropriate adaptation;
- methods of dissemination of the research findings should be specified.

In relation to the implementation of particular proposals, factors to be taken into account include:

- a statement of the problem;
- an indication of the scope of the problem in countries throughout the Region;
- an indication of research methodologies to be employed, including specification of the groups or populations to be studied; the research instruments to be employed or developed; how the study will be implemented in terms of data collection; and how the results will be interpreted by means of appropriate analytic and evaluation procedures;
- an indication of how the research findings will be disseminated;
- an indication of the relevance of the research findings for utilization by other countries in the Region.

Of the ten research areas described in Chapter Three, several member countries have expressed interest in conducting research in the first five areas, as follows:

1. Preparation of children for school

Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand are interested in undertaking a collaborative research project in this area, in order to develop a set of ways in which children can be effectively prepared for school. The value of such a collaborative research project would lie in the fact that circumstances in these host countries differ, particularly with respect to the extent of pre-school provision and varying entry ages to primary schooling. A collaborative project would ensure that a set of measures for preparing children for schooling would be devised, appropriate to the variety of pre school provisions and school entry ages apparent throughout the Region. This would be preferable to one country devising a preparation programme suited to just its circumstances, for such a programme might be of little use to many other countries in the Region.

2. Teaching strategies and instructional materials for the disadvantaged

India, the Republic of Korea, Nepal and Thailand are interested in conducting research in this area, particularly related to finding effective ways to develop methods and materials for preparing teachers to detect and remediate learning difficulties in reading, language, and mathematics.

3. Linguistic development in education

Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines are interested in conducting research in this area, particularly related to finding effective ways of improving children's oral language and vocabulary skills, partly to help children adjust better to school, partly as a preparation for the better learning of reading, and partly to improve the language of school textbooks.

4. Meta-analysis

India, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand are interested in conducting meta-analytic studies on a variety of completed research studies, particularly as this relates to educational policy making.

5. Ethnographic studies

India and Thailand are interested in undertaking a series of ethnographic studies on customs and attitudes to schooling in a variety of groups of different ethnic and caste origins. Such studies would be particularly directed towards the amelioration of learning problems, the enhancement of children's achievement in schools, the improvement of children's self images, and the reduction of high drop-out rates.

The participants prepared designs of studies which in their opinion should be promoted by Unesco under APEID as a matter of first priority. A summary description of three types of research studies, formulated by the participants, is presented in a tabular form.

Table 1. Summary Description of the Studies of Immediate Interest to several participating Countries

Country	Title of Research	Factors/Issues	Research Approach	Responsible Institution/Person(s)	Date of Completion of Study
Collaborative Project					
Afghanistan Australia Republic of Korea Malaysia Nepal Pakistan Philippines Thailand	Preparation of children for school	In children: – Cognitive abilities; Linguistic abilities; Social and emotional abilities; Motor abilities. In parents: – Knowledge of schooling; Positive attitudes to education; Assistance to children. In schools: – Teacher's roles; Effective communication with parents.	Stage I: – Identification of factors and problems (including litarature reviews; meta-analytic studies; surveys; studies of communities). Stage II: – Development of materials, and testing their suitability with samples of parents. Identification of suitable media for presentation of materials. Stage III: Distribution of materials *via* selected media.		End 1985

Table II. Summary Description of the Studies of Immediate Interest to Individual Countries

Country	Title of Research	Factors/Issues	Research Approach	Responsible Institution/Person(s)	Date of Completion of Study
Australia	Parent education programme	To provide parents with a systematic programme of information about their children's development (age range: birth-6 years)	Design of materials and media, and checking their comprehensibility with samples of parents, particularly those of low SES and low level of education populations	University of Western Australia/Dr. R. Grieve	End 1985
Bangladesh	Identification and remediation of reading difficulties of primary level children	a) normalcy of vision b) reading speed c) recognition of symbols and comprehension d) verbalization of concepts e) coherence in writing	Measuring the degrees of difficulties in factors/issues and proposing possible remedies at the teacher's level	Institute of Education and Research, Dhaka University, in co-operation with the Directorate of Primary Education/Dr. Shamsul Haque	End 1984
India	Changes in achievements and personality factors of disadvantaged and other children studying in primary classes I-V in urban and rural schools	Academic aptitude: achievement in subjects/Grades I-V; personality variables; SES of families; parent-child relations; school climate; social skills developed.	Study of school records; re-analysis of data from an earlier longitudinal investigation into dropout problem; structured interviews with individual parents	National Council of Educational Research and Training/Dr. Sharma	End 1983

Table III. Project on Integration of Research Studies

Country	Title of Research	Factors/Issues	Research Approach	Responsible Institution/Person(s)	Date of Completion of Study
Republic of Korea	Meta-analytic research on early intervention programmes	1. Effects of early intervention on children's preparation for school – cognitive abilities (language skills, perceptual development, concept formation, etc.) – affective traits (self-concept, achievement motivation, attitudes toward teacher and school, etc.) – psychomotor skills (eye-hand co-ordination, motor skills, physical readiness, etc.) 2. Effects of early intervention on parental involvement and attitudes toward child education 3. Other effects and factors	1. Definition of population of "studies" 2. Collection of available research data 3. Transformation and standardization of the data 4. Statistical analysis of the data 5. Integration and general conclusions	Department of Education Chungnam National University/Dr. Lee Jong Seung	End 1984

Annex I

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Election of officers of the Meeting and consideration of the provisional schedule of work
3. Review of country experiences and research studies on the nature of learning problems of children
4. Critical problems and issues related to major learning problems of children; and critical appraisal of the state of the art in designing, developing executing and evaluating training programmes for teachers, supervisors and other concerned personnel
5. Conceptual framework and methodological consideration for future research on learning problems; and development of designs for future training programmes
6. Suggested agenda and designs for future research at national level and co-operation in the region; and development of a draft plan for national pilot training workshops, by countries
7. Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the Meeting

Annex II

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Mr. C. Barabas
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Miss Charatsri Vajrabhaya
Assistant Programme Specialist
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Annex III

COMPOSITION OF TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

Technical Working Group 1: Nature of Learning Problems and Future Research

Chairman	Dr. Aree Sunhachawee	(Thailand)
Group Rapporteur	Dr. A.N. Sharma	(India)
Members	Dr. Robert Grieve	(Australia)
	Mr. B.N. Aryal	(Nepal)
	Ms. Shaheen Chowdhri	(Pakistan)
	Prof. Isabel Tablante	(Philippines)
	Dr. Jong Seung Lee	(Republic of Korea)
Secretariat	Dr. A. Latif	
	Dr. I. Ayman	

Technical Working Group 2: Training Programmes for Teachers, Supervisors and Other Concerned Personnel in Context of Learning Needs of Children

Chairman	Dr. Shamsul Haque	(Bangladesh)
Group Rapporteur	Dr. B.P. Gupta	(India)
Members	Dr. Aziz Ahmad Yusofzai	(Afghanistan)
	Dr. B.K. Mallik	(Nepal)
	Ms. Hanim Abdul Rahman	(Malaysia)
	Dr. Paz G. Ramos	(Philippines)
	Dr. S.A. Siddiqui	(Pakistan)
	Dr. Moegiadi	(SEAMES)
Secretariat	Dr. H.K. Paik	
	Mr. C.T. Crellin	
	Mr. T.M. Sakya	

Annex IV

Address by Mr. Raja Roy Singh, Assistant Director-General, Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific, at the Opening Session, 6 September 1983

Distinguished participants and observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you this morning at the opening of the two Technical Working Group Meetings on Meeting the Learning Needs of Children, with Special Reference to Disadvantaged Population Groups.

On behalf of the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific and on my own behalf, I wish to extend a warm welcome to all the distinguished participants.

As you might have detected, your distinguished assembly is made up of two groups. As a matter of fact this meeting is a portfolio of two meetings. The work of both groups arises out of the problems of learning of children; one group is to identify and study problems, determine how much we know about them and how this knowledge base can be expanded. The second group addresses itself to the very important and practical task of how we prepare teachers so that they can deal with the learning problems of children. The two groups will be having a few common sessions and will then part to pursue their respective enquiries and come together again at the end.

The problems of learning which you are considering have an immediate importance to the developing countries. They relate to the efforts to universalize primary education.

Universalization of education at the primary level has been one of the key concerns of Unesco, particularly in this region. It is an essential component of the major programme area of Unesco's Medium-Term Plan (1984-89) entitled "Education for All"; where it is complementing to adult literacy, and a component of the strategy for democratization of education. In the context of the Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development, universalization of education, with its three prominent aspects of universal access to primary education almost total completion rate, and maximum achievement, is one to receive the highest priority.

Learning problems of children at the primary stage have become a major concern in the policies and programme of the countries of the region. This concern reflects the general awareness among the peoples of the countries even where universal enrolment has been ensured, that there are the major blocks in learning, particularly in the basic subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic; achievement in these areas affects the rates of survival and completion in the primary grades. APEID is, therefore, formulating a project for raising the achievement of children through effective preparation for entry to primary education; introduction of more effective

strategies and methods of instruction in schools; involvement of and effective community participation in primary education; and appropriate orientation of teachers and other educational personnel.

I am grateful to your Governments for enabling you to participate in these Technical Working Groups which are expected to make enormous impacts on the situation of primary education in terms of policies and plans of the Governments of the region in respect of universalization of education, and in ensuring that all children at this stage would receive the best opportunities for development and achievement.

I am happy to inaugurate the Meetings, and wish every success in your deliberations.

SELECTED APEID PUBLICATIONS RELATING TO LEARNING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

* *Educational policy, curriculum development and implementation. 1978.*
* *Population evaluation. 1978.*
* *Universalizing education; new techniques for preparing educational personnel. 1979.*
* *Universalizing education: strategies for development and use of instructional materials. 1979.*

Teacher education: directions of change. 1979.

* *Universalizing education: linking formal and non-formal programmes. 1979.*

Evaluating pupil development – productive skills training; moral education. 1980.

Towards better health and nutrition. 1981.

Curriculum development, by Malcolm Skilbeck (Occasional Paper No. 9).

Language development and intellectual functioning, by Kevin F. Collis (Occasional Paper No. 10)

Integrating subject areas in primary education curriculum – a joint innovative project. 1982.

In-service primary education in Asia. 1982.

Multiple class teaching and education of disadvantaged groups; national studies: India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Republic of Korea. 1982.

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* Out of stock

The Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) has as its primary goal to contribute to the building of national capabilities for undertaking educational innovations linked to the problems of national development, thereby improving the quality of life of the people in the Member States.

All projects and activities within the framework of APEID are designed, developed and implemented co-operatively by the participating Member States through over one hundred national centres which they have associated for this purpose with APEID.

The 22 Member States participating in APEID are: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Turkey.

Each country has set up a National Development Group (NDG) to identify and support educational innovations for development within the country and facilitate exchange between countries.

The Asian Centre of Educational Innovation for Development (ACEID), an integral part of the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, co-ordinates the activities under AFEID and assists the Associated Centres (AC) in carrying them out.

The eight programme areas under which the APEID activities are organized during the third cycle (1982–1986) are:

1. Universalization of education: access to education at first level by both formal and non-formal means;
2. Education for promotion of scientific and technological competence and creativity;
3. Education and work;
4. Education and rural development;
5. Education and urban development;
6. Educational technology with stress on mass media and low-cost instructional materials;
7. Professional support services and training of educational personnel;
8. Co-operative studies, reflections and research related to educational development and future orientations.